

Isle au Haut Historical Society Zoom meeting with Adam Fisher of the Maine State Library
May 6, 2021
Meeting hosted by Bob Smith and Kris Carlson-Lewis

Attendees: Adam Fisher, Tom Guglielmo, Bob Smith, Stew Foelix, Brenda Clark, Marie Hamly, Joan Tilney, Anne Davidson, Harold van Doren, Wendall Chamberlin, Sue Chamberlin, Donna Hopkins (via audio), Kendra Chubbuck, Kris Carlson-Lewis

Plan: to learn about the resources available to assist communities in the state of Maine with the digitization of their collections

Plan: overview of services the Maine State Library could provide in assisting us in the digitization of our collections.

Points made:

- Discussion of various types of scanning equipment available to entities either (1) portable scanners via loan with instructions on use, or (2) scanning equipment available to entity where volunteer goes to the state library and is instructed in the use of some of the appropriate scanning options whether flat bed or overhead, etc.
- Adam shared that they had the capability of saving a number of different types of media whether documents, VHS tapes, LP records, slides and negatives, cassette tapes, etc.; also, equipment allows for tagging of images with mapping software (ask Adam)
- Digital copies allows for protection of the originals from wear and tear, consider copyright laws with more recent documents, historical significance, condition, and of course, volunteer availability in how choose to proceed with collection
- Scanners don't always recognize handwriting of some scanned documents so it is sometimes necessary to hire staff to transcribe handwritten materials or have volunteers available to do so [This is a deficiency of Optical Character Recognition (OCR)]
- Volunteer would bring a thumb drive to save scanned documents or the scanner would be hooked up to a computer and the information could be transferred directly
- Discussed the Maine digital repository and interface with other entities such as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), Library of Congress (LOC) and noted many of them have Maine material
- The question of previous town reports scanned by former Island fellow, Meghan Cooper was raised and Adam noted there is a second required step in the digitization process to complete the IAH town reports before being uploaded. A volunteer is needed to develop a form of finding aid to complete this process.
- Microfilm is the ultimate form of saving and preserving documents; however, this is an extremely time-consuming and expensive process so the alternative is digital back-up repositories. This is a topic that needs to be discussed and decided by the historical society board.

- Mention made of how these digital records should be stored; in the past, many entities have utilized a private proprietary organizational system such as Past Perfect but these are an expensive alternative and ultimately unless the organization has an individual always available to maintain such a collection, it behooves us to carefully consider an open-ended data collection system with “survivability.”
- Adam recommended maintenance of the original files was an important consideration as one never knows if an act of war or unknown radiation exposure might destroy digital copies of the documents.
- Harold commented on the need for digital back-up of our collections due to the previous loss of IAH records due to (1) fire at the Hancock County courthouse (when?) and (2) loss of numerous IAH town records when the home of one of the selectman burned as many town files were stored at his home. Harold shared that he had copied some of our files on a thumb drive.
- Kendra shared that the state legislature is considering an initiative (LD 1010 – Maine Service Fellows to keep young individuals in Maine) for the hiring of community fellows with a stipend; efforts to be led by an advisory council; she suggested the MSL might want to consider use of such a fellow for assistance in their backlog with scanning, etc.
- Tom G. mentioned records from Harold and Wayne are now in his possession and he will bring them north this season upon his return to the island (about 10 boxes).
- A printout of equipment available for scanning was requested; Adam noted he will forward his planned presentation which covers what equipment they have available for services.
- Another request was guidance on how to organize our collection for scanning purposes; Adam responded that depended on what was a priority for us...fragile documents vs. other priorities
- Due to time constraints and with no further questions, the meeting was concluded.

Kristen Carlson-Lewis
Acting Secretary